

CULTURA E FORMAZIONE

FILOSOFIA

Collana diretta da Francesco Coniglione

26

**PHILOSOPHY AND ART
IN LATE ANTIQUITY**

Proceedings of the International Seminar of Catania,
8-9 November 2012

ed. by
Daniele Iozzia

BONANNO EDITORE

Finito di stampare nel mese di ottobre 2012
Stampadiretta - Catania

ISBN 978-88-96950-65-4

Proprietà artistiche e letterarie riservate
Copyright © 2013 – Bonanno Editore
Acireale
www.bonannoeditore.it
bonannoeditore@gmail.i

INDICE

D. Iozzia, <i>Introduction</i>	p. 7
I. MUSIC	
A. Brancacci, <i>Music and Philosophy in the First Book of Aristides Quintilianus' De Musica</i>	" 13
S.B. Moro Tornese, <i>Musical Aesthetics and the Transformation of the Soul in Neoplatonism</i>	" 31
II. LITERATURE	
A. Sheppard, "Vedere un mondo in un granello di sabbia": <i>Teoria letteraria ed estetica in Proclo</i>	p. 69
P. Destrée, <i>La catharsis tragique à l'épreuve de Philodème et des néoplatoniciens</i>	" 91
A. Stavru, <i>Ekphrasis e verosimiglianza nelle eikones di Filostrato il Vecchio</i>	" 115
III. VISUAL ARTS AND THE HERITAGE OF LATE ANTIQUITY	
D. Iozzia, «Come mai l'oro è bello?». <i>Plotino, Enn. I 6 (1), 34 e i Cappadoci</i>	p. 128
C. Martello, <i>Pulchrum and Pulchritudo in John Eriugena</i>	" 149

MUSICAL AESTHETICS AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE SOUL IN NEOPLATONISM

*Sebastian F. Moro Tornese*¹

In this paper I would like to examine Neoplatonic views on musical aesthetics in relation to the role of music in the transformation of the inner self. According to Platonism, the aim of music is not simply to provoke aesthetic emotions. Its main purpose is to convey eloquently an intelligible content of harmony that changes the person who hears it. Plato presented clearly this point of view in the *Timaeus*:

Of sound and hearing once more the same account may be given: they are a gift from heaven for the same intent and purpose. For not only was speech appointed to this same intent, to which it contributes in the largest measure, but also all that part of Music that is serviceable with respect to the hearing of sound is given for the sake of harmony; and harmony, whose motions are akin (*syngenēs*) to the revolutions of the soul within us, has been given by the Muses to him whose commerce with them is guided by intelligence (*noûs*), not for the sake of irrational (*alogos*) pleasure (which is now thought to be its utility), but as an ally against the inward discord that has come into the revolution of the soul, to bring it into order and consonance with itself. Rhythm also was a succour bestowed upon us by the same hands to the same intent, because in the most part of us our condition is lacking in measure and poor in grace (*ametros kai chariton epideēs*). (*Timaeus*, 47 D-E, transl. Cornford)

According to this text, music – as a gift of the Muses – restores the inward concord of the soul, if one approaches its melodic content with “*noûs*” and with an attitude which is receptive to *logos* (the numerical/proportional structure of musical intervals). Melodies are musical thoughts expressed in the language of music; the Platonic attitude corresponds to an active and intellectual participation on that musical thought (rather than passive acceptance). Simultaneously, the rhythmic aspect of music also produces measure and grace and organizes those thoughts in

¹ Royal Holloway, University of London.

musical phrases. Nevertheless, we do not need to interpret this intellectual approach as rejecting all emotions and pleasures; the Platonists only discard their “irrational” or negative aspects. On the other hand, the emotions evoked by music have the ability to open up the receptivity of the soul towards a cosmic openness in itself, which makes possible the connection (*synecheia*) of all levels of reality according to measure.

We can associate this aspect of ‘openness’ with the notion of ‘*apeiria*’ and the even numbers, which in turn correspond to a double progression in music that produces intervals of octave (e.g. the mathematical-musical system in Plato’s *Timaeus* 35B ff.). The Pythagoreans and the Neoplatonists (commenting on the *Timaeus*) associated *apeiron* with the female, generative principle of reality (procession) and *peras* with the male and determinative principle (reversion) (cf. Arist. *Met.* 986a22 and Proclus, *In Tim.* II.221.5-223.20).

In a similar context, Philolaus called the central fire ‘Hestia’, the mother of the gods, and the measure of nature (Stob. *Eclog. Physic.* 1.22.1.p.488). At the same time, Philolaus conceived the cosmos as the result of a harmonization of opposite principles; therefore an aspect of ‘*peras*’ is also contained in that central fire, which is the first harmonized reality (Fr.7).² Thus the opposites become complementaries in their gravitation towards the centre and in the musical arrangement, harmony produces other notes thanks to the receptivity and openness of the octaves in relation to the intervals of fifth, which correspond to a triple progression (3 is the first odd number). The fifths are generative (or determinative *logoi*): they produce ‘new’ notes, while the octaves are productive of the same notes. To be receptive to “measure” corresponds to the motherly aspect of the musical scale, and it is interesting that ‘mother’ and ‘measure’ are etymologically related words in many ancient languages. The element of “*peras*”, is a principle of determination and introduces the new notes that correspond to the intervals that define the middle of the octave (the fifth 3/2 and the fourth 4/3); also in this case the musical space of the modal scales gravitates around a central note called “*mese*”.

However, the female principle, the divine *apeiria*, should not

² The central fire under the aspect of *peras* (contained in the first harmonization) corresponds to a unity. Cf. Huffman, *Philolaus of Croton*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p.205.

be interpreted as merely passive, because such an interpretation would fail to recognise the fullness or richness of Infinity, and the fact that in order to measure anything one needs first to surround it and embrace it in a continuous and caring way.

Harmony, since Philolaus (cf. Fr.6), has been conceived as a cosmic principle that fits together the other basic principles called *perainonta* and *apeira*. Philolaus chose the diatonic scale to illustrate how cosmic harmony works. A Neoplatonist like Proclus, combines the Platonic and Pythagorean versions of this doctrine of the harmonization of the pair of principles; it is clear that in the context of Neoplatonism there is a transcendent non-dual Unity above the duality of cosmic principles. Therefore, harmony is a re-enactment of the unity of *peras* and *apeiron* already present in a causal and inexpressible way within the Unity.³

The musical scale is able to express harmony as a recovery of Unity in the realm of multiplicity and opposition, and in this way it reconnects the soul with that primordial and central Unity “before” its polarization in the two cosmic/creative principles. The scale is the result of a “generation”, metaphorically expressed in terms of the fertility of the union of female and male musical notes or intervals.

The feminine or motherly aspect corresponds to the Unlimited, which the Neoplatonists understood as the Infinite power of the Unity (*apeirodynamis*), while the male aspect corresponds to the Limit and the Intelligible model according to which the harmonic divisions occur: the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*, as father, reflects the *peras* aspect of the Unity and he arranges the World-Soul as a musical scale and aims to direct the creation towards

³ On the Neoplatonic version of *peras* and *apeiron* see Anne Sheppard, “Monad and Dyad as Cosmic Principles in Syrianus” in *Soul and the Structure of Being in Late Neoplatonism: Syrianus, Proclus and Simplicius*, ed. H. J. Blumenthal; A. C. Lloyd. Liverpool : Liverpool University Press, 1982. p. 1-14. I prefer to use the words *peras* and *apeiron* (limit and unlimited). Even though I am aware that Philolaus uses *perainonta* and *apeira*, we do not know if these meant the principles according to their cosmic function (principles of things) or if Philolaus may have also mentioned *peras* and *apeiron* in the way Aristotle and the Platonic tradition employ these terms later. If I use the words, according to Aristotle’s account of the Pythagorean doctrines (the table of opposites), it is because in this way the terms sound more like referring to principles rather than things. While, on the contrary, Huffman’s translation “limiters and unlimiteds” sounds as a reification of the principles because he does not accept a Pythagorean notion of trascendence.

Unity and the Good.

The musical scale that Plato depicts in the *Timaeus*, is composed according to the same structure (*systema*) as the scale of Philolaus, and represents the interplay of *peras* and *apeiron* in the Universe and how the human soul reflects it. Due to space reasons, we cannot provide a more detailed analysis of the *Timaeus* and the Neoplatonic interpretation of the scale.⁴

Iamblichus and Proclus, following the Pythagorean tradition, interpreted the musical scale of *Timaeus* as composed by male and female numbers (a “marriage” of *peras* and *apeiron*) and therefore, conceived the order of the universe in a dynamic way, in which reality is not only an “abstract” order; it is rather depicted according to a metaphor which expresses the divine “life” present in the cosmos and in the desire of inner transformation of the human soul. Measure (*metron* in Greek) cannot be merely related to a cold mental arrangement, disconnected from its counterpart in the “openness” and “receptivity” towards measure that corresponds to the aspect of *apeiron*.

According to Iamblichus’ interpretation of the *Timaeus* (Proclus, *In Tim.* II 215.1 ff), the musical octaves (numerical ratio 2/1) are related to the procession and continuity of the universe and the embracing potentiality of the divine *apeiria* (mirrored in the dyad). At the same time, this procession is able to be contained, embraced in actuality, by the different musical notes thanks to the “returning” capacity of the interval of fifth, which corresponds to the triad and number 3 (its ratio being 3/2) (an aspect of intelligence, which returns towards the contemplated intelligible object).⁵ The interval of fourth (and the tetrachords) – which is another important feature of the musical scale –, is related to the

⁴ For a detailed study of these matters see my *Philosophy of Music in the Neoplatonic Tradition: Theories of Music and Harmony in Proclus’ Commentaries on Plato’s Timaeus and Republic* (unpublished PhD thesis), Royal Holloway, University of London, 2010.

⁵ For example, Proclus in his *In Tim.* II 205.2 ff, explains the musical symbolism of the numbers 8 and 9 in terms of reproductive and procession (8 as square of the dyad) and reversion upon the cause (9 as square of the triad): “For all knowledge brings about the reversion of the knower upon that which is known, just as all nature seeks to reproduce and to have the procession taken into the things below” (transl Baltzly).

tetrad as cosmic model. Accordingly, all the intervals in the musical scale, which depend on *logoi* that come from the monad, receive the ability of reverting towards the Unity.⁶

Consequently, we can try to understand the metaphysical symbolism of the musical scale —and its transformative power—, according to the following distinction. The difference between the embracing *apeiron* (almost in a Milesian sense) and the circular embrace of *peras* expressed with the *logoi* of the musical intervals —included in a system of notes (*systema*)—, resides in the reference to a central unity (a keynote called *mesē*) and to an axial organization of the musical space that marks the steps of the return of the soul, which can be expressed as the process of ascending a musical scale (harmony of the spheres). This combines both the openness and contemplative attitude (*apeiron*) with an aspect of systematic knowledge that follows a method expressed with the tonal diatonic steps (*peras*).

In this sense, harmony is a re-enactment and restoration of the primordial Unity, which is previous to the complementary duality of principles of *peras* and *apeiron*. Through music, the human soul is able to re-present or imitate the creation of the world, understood as a harmonic process, and to restore order (*katakōsmēsis*) and consonance (*sympophonia*) with itself, as Plato says in the passage quoted above (*Timaeus*, 47 D-E), while returning towards the Unity.

In this context, the emotions and sensible beauty presented in the audible sounds of music acquire a universality thanks to the awareness in which we are actively engaged when hearing in an attentive way. At the same time, this kind of music cannot be simply a manifestation of an abstract-quantitative discipline; because the Neoplatonic conception of Intelligible Harmony is something more real and more encompassing than plain abstract contents of the mind: the Intelligible has an aspect of hypostatic Life (abstractions on the contrary are lifeless) and for the Neoplatonists, it corresponds to a divine reality (while abstractions are merely

⁶ The structure of the musical scale of the *Timaeus*, according to the Neoplatonic interpretation, represents metaphysical principles such as those presented by Proclus in the *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 29: “All procession is accomplished through a likeness of the secondary to the primary” and Prop. 33: “all that proceeds from any principle and reverts upon it has a cyclic activity (*kyklikē energeia*)” (transl. Dodds).

human). Therefore, the harmonic structure of music is not just a matter of cerebral order; it corresponds to structures and measures of “substantial” character.

It is usually understood that the Pythagorean doctrine of the harmony of the spheres corresponds to an abstract music, which is rational and depends on numerical order. In a sense, this account of Pythagorean music is correct, but from another point of view, it does not give us a full explanation of the matter. The Neoplatonists pointed out that this kind of interpretation depends on Aristotle’s conception of number; but the genuine Pythagorean version – as reported by Iamblichus, Syrianus and Proclus –, is that numbers are something else than rational abstractions.⁷ The Neoplatonists considered that the Pythagoreans were able to distinguish levels of number, according to which divine number and the sources of the harmony in the world are higher realities than the mere quantitative numbers used to count in the discursive and derived level. In this context, it is not enough to say that the harmony of the spheres is “rational”. Even though it depends on “ratios”, this harmony is the product of principles that are higher than “reason”, because the non-discursive creative Principle of the universe is a *Noûs* (not a *Ratio*) and the ultimate Principle of all is the One.

In order to trascend “rationalism”, the Pythagorean/Platonic conception of music should be understood in the context of a classical definition of art (*technê*): *ars imitatur naturam in sua operatione* (art imitates nature but in its manner of operation); as Thomas Aquinas (*In Physicorum* II.171) said commenting on Aristotle, *Physics*, II.2.

⁷ Aristoxenus defines his harmonic science in opposition to the Pythagorean/Platonic approach, as a combination of trained hearing or *aisthesis* and reason (*dianoia*). The Aristotelian point of view starts from perceptible data while reason apprehends the structural arrangement of a melody, the functions (*dynamicis*) of the notes, etc. Cf. Aristox. *Harm.* II, 32-33 and A. Barker’s notes 10-12 to his translation (*Greek Musical Writings*, vol. II, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 149-150). The abstract structural order that *dianoia* finds in the perceptible data, according to Aristoxenus, is not a reflection of a metaphysically transcendent numerical order. The Pythagorean/Platonic perspective considers first ideal numbers and harmonies (both qualitative and quantitative, indivisible order) and subsequently finds them functioning in the cosmos, thanks to the creativity of universal *Noûs* and *Logos* (not just human *logos*) that projects them as visible and audible realities.

Art imitates the inner creative power of nature (a creation of art is not just an inert or external copy, it is an extension of the capacity of nature). Therefore, music as a *technē* mirrors a divine *technē* operating in nature, which is not composed of inert stuff or abstractions, but of living principles, organized according to a numerical structure. The Pythagoreans, according to Syrianus (*In Met.* 13, p.123,2-11; cf. Iamblichus, *In Nic.*10.20), spoke about a *logos technikos* that is productive and dynamic, identified with number as “canon” (*kanôn*, measure and model) and the instrument used by the divine artist for the composition (*systasis*) and generation of all things.⁸

Number as a cosmic model is related to the Decad, which contains the paradigms of order. The Decad is a manifestation of the inner harmony of the Tetrad and accomplishes more externally a cosmos. The Tetrad as the source or “*dynamis*” of the Decad consists of the *tetrakty*.⁹ The tetrad (1+2+3+4) is the source of the harmony of the universe because it contains the numbers of the main musical concords: the octave, the fifth, the fourth (2/1; 3/2 and 4/3).

We can see that the analogy works in both directions; it is not just that art imitates nature, but also nature produces the cosmos according to a divine “art”, because nature and its principles are depicted as operating according to a *technē* which brings out ratios and harmony; using measures and proportions in the same way as a musician uses them.

Syrianus also quotes Hippasus, who defines number as the paradigm and instrument for the production of the cosmos. Syrianus adds that Philolaus, on the other hand, considered number as the regulating and self-generated bond of the “eternal continuance” of the things in the cosmos.¹⁰ He was probably expressing

⁸ *Kanôn* means in greek rule, standard, model and in this tradition, the monochord, the instrument used to study and measure the intervals (it can be used as a model for defining a tuning system).

⁹ Cf. On the tetrad as *dynamis*, and the decad as *entelecheia* or *energeia*, see H. Schibli, *Hierocles of Alexandria*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 279 ff. This author explains that “these Aristotelian distinctions are, however, inverted by Neoplatonic authors in the sense that for them the idea of potency carries a reality that is ontologically superior to act [...] the decad is an emanation of the tetrad.”

¹⁰ Cf. G. Stamatellos, *Plotinus and the Pre-socratics*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2007, pp.101-103.

with this the eternal unity and harmony of the elements of number, according to which there are not only numbered steps or intervals, but also a continuous substantial unity that corresponds to eternity, which the Neoplatonists understood as the “measure” of eternal realities and in relation to Intelligible life and its concentration towards the One (cf. Proclus, *In Parm.* 1119.4 ff.).

Music as an art essentially linked to time is able to express time and rhythm not only in their more external manifestations but also in terms of the concentration towards the source of time and the inner substance of eternity.¹¹

Accordingly, although music possesses a mathematical (numerical) structure and foundation, the quantitative and intervallic depends on divine numbers which have a creative/transformative effect on nature and the human soul while turning reality towards eternity and unification. This kind of art can be defined as “sacred art” (inspired art) because the “rational” or “technical” aspects of its method are not merely human, they are a manifestation of the living power of Nature understood as “*apeirodynamis*” in Neoplatonism.

Neoplatonic musical aesthetics supposes a philosophical reflection on the essence of music. This kind of reflection must be “substantial”, therefore it has to be transformative, based on the affinity between the substance of music and the harmonic substance of the soul. In the context of the exegesis of Plato’s *Timaeus*, Proclus explains the aim of this kind of reflection in the following terms:

Let the manner of exegesis of the soul’s essence be naturally consonant with the essence (*ousia*) of the soul itself. You must free yourself from the [mere] appearance of harmony, and lift yourself up to the substantive (*ousiōdēs*) and immaterial harmony, and be led back from images to the paradigms [of these images]. For the concordances that flow through our ears and which consist in soundings and strikings differ entirely from the concordance of what is life-giving and intellectual. Therefore, let no one stop at the point of the mathematical consideration of the subject at hand. Instead he should urge himself on to examine this subject in a manner fitting to the essence of the soul. (...) Rather, focus on the actual things that are said [in Plato’s text] and reason about how these convey an indication of the intermediate nature of the soul and how they attempt to elucidate

¹¹ Astronomy on the other hand deals with cosmic rhythms and cycles according to their manifestation in the world in the context of time and space.

the Demiurgic providence. (*In Tim.* II.195, 11-24, transl. Baltzly).

We can study the harmony of the soul and understand it as the source of sensible harmony, in terms of mathematical proportions. But we should not stay at this level of mathematical science, because we are considering harmony as something that is ultimately related to Intelligible “Life”. We must go beyond mathematical harmony and consider it an image of the Intelligible, in the same way that sensible music is an image of that mathematical harmony, which is intermediate.

The point of view of scientific knowledge (which has a discursive nature) should be transcended in the direction of metaphysical knowledge, which is intuitive and life-giving. Metaphysical knowledge is “concrete” (it focuses not on abstractions but on actual things – even though these are intelligible objects in this case –, as Proclus says). For this reason, art and music are a privileged way of understanding, analogically, these metaphysical realities, because they present concrete symbolisms.

Neoplatonic music, which follows the Pythagorean tradition, is regarded as both a science and an art, and it is a combination of objective criteria of order with life-giving and transformative aspects. This interplay between knowledge and life gives science an existential and metaphysical aim and provides art with an image of the cosmic order and its causes, presenting them with an effective and appealing language for human existence, especially because this kind of art is a symbolic art. As a result, music speaks directly to our soul and our feelings and makes it vibrate together with a higher truth that has a transformative and healing effect.

On the one hand, the beauty of musical compositions corresponds to a formal aspect, related to the cosmic laws of harmony, which are expressed as paradigmatic musical scales and rhythms. On the other hand, there is an aspect of beauty that transcends form, to which we shall refer later.

The science of harmonics studies the more formal and quantitative aspects of music, however, from a Pythagorean point of view, music as a mathematical science always considers numbers as evocations or images of qualitative principles of order. For this reason, in Pythagoreanism and Neoplatonism there is no risk for philosophy and science of becoming just a quantitative abstract

activity, because knowing is always related to being and the intellect and the soul assimilate being and beauty in an existential way.

Art and music suppose a similar existential approach; the Pythagoreans practiced a kind of music therapy and sung paeans to the accompaniment of the lyre and Proclus composed hymns to the gods (Marsilio Ficino sung the *Orphic Hymns* to the accompaniment of the *lyra da braccio*). The musical phrases or thoughts built from scales can serve as a contemplative tool and to draw down the influence of a particular cosmic aspect in theurgic rites. This is possible because of the symbolic value of each musical mode or modal scale, which awakes the sympathy between human music and the corresponding qualities in the divine reality.¹²

In the same way, geometry is a qualitative expression of the numbers of arithmetic and geometric symbols are tools for meditation and serve as the source for the structure of meaningful architectural spaces that convey a metaphysical-spiritual truth.

Musical and geometric forms that depend on number are connected to Intelligible forms which are linked to divine qualities or *seirai*, especially in Iamblichus' and Proclus' version of Neoplatonism.¹³

Together with the formal aspect, music communicates a "formless", vital, meaning that corresponds to a spiritual content, which is a manifestation of a higher knowledge and truth. We say "formless" in the Plotinian sense; because Plotinus says that beautiful things possess form (*morphe*), but the source of beauty and form is Formless Beauty, above beauty and form (even above Intellectual form) (*Enn. VI.7.32.6-9*).¹⁴ The One is the measure of all things but it is beyond measure and magnitude and its greatness is not a matter of quantity because it is Infinite. As we mentioned above, this aspect of *apeiria*, postulated by Iamblichus and Proclus as one of the two highest principles of Being – primal Limit and primal Limitlessness –, has to be present and manifested in a

¹² See R.M. van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns, Essays, Translations, Commentary*, Leiden, Brill, 2001, p. 95 and S. Klitenic Wear, "Ficino's Hymns and the Renaissance Platonic Academy" in *Laus Platonici Philosophi: Marsilio Ficino and His Influence*, ed. S. Clucas, P. J. Forshaw, V. Rees, Leiden, Brill, 2011, pp. 133-148.

¹³ Cf. van den Berg, *ibid.* p.167.

¹⁴ Cf. F.M.Schroeder, "Vigil of the One and Plotinian Iconoclasm", in *Neoplatonism and Western Aesthetics*, ed. A. Alexandrakis and N. Moutafakis, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2002, p.70.

way in each creation of musical beauty.

Art as a discipline related to life and symbolism, is a craft that one cannot learn only from books (the rational organization of knowledge and its discursive presentation or explanation of things is not enough); one needs the vital experience of hearing a teacher.

As Plato says in the *Phaedrus* (276e), the voice of the teacher awakes the spiritual seeds in the soul. For Proclus, who follows the *Chaldean Oracles*, the efficacy of the voice of the teacher must be related to that “sacred word” or “divine symbol” which awakes the unifying power of the “flower of the *noûs*” in the soul.¹⁵

The teacher, in a theurgic context, is performing a re-enactment of the creation of the world in its pedagogic relation with the disciple. His voice is like the voice of the Demiurge who plants the acoustic seeds, the divine names or sounding essences of all things in the Universe. Since the Divine Word has a vibratory nature, the transformation of the soul that listens and is attentive to it, is possible thanks to the quality of being a malleable substance, which is receptive to those vibrations in a way that is comparable to the waters of creation.

The articulated word and its determinations are related to the discursive manifestation of the forms; however the acoustic qualities of the word are in a sense related to that “formless” aspect mentioned before. Plotinus also says that the transformation of the soul means precisely transformation, make a journey beyond form because the One, the aim of that journey is itself beyond form (cf. *Enn.* VI.9.11.42 and Plato, *Rep.* 509B9).

In which sense the purpose of art, and especially that of music, is related to inner transformation and how is that music is able to assist the soul in this aspect?

The answer to this question depends on the type of Music being referred to. Music as a science, promotes self-knowledge, *anamnesis*, and makes the soul receptive of a higher influence and dynamically directs its journey through a vertical axis of ascent, as the one depicted by Martianus Capella in his *De Nuptiis*. In this context, music is part of the sciences of the *quadrivium* and it

¹⁵ Cf. R.D. Majercik, *The Chaldean oracles: text, translation, and commentary*, Leiden, Brill, 1989, pp. 41-42.

is mainly aimed to the cognitive faculties of the soul. In another sense, music as a hieratic or inspired art, employs a living symbolism, which transforms the “matter” or substance of the soul into a receptacle of the formless light and primordial sound of the Divine Word (Hermes, Apollo and the Muses). Symbolism and life, as a feminine aspect of reality, are related to the divine *apeiria*: music, in a sense, helps the soul to become empty of other sounds (or noises) and to open up in a contemplative attitude towards Unity as the fountain of Harmony. This corresponds to the soul’s affective disposition or desire (*orexis*) for the Good.¹⁶

Music, as *concordia discors*, belongs to Mars in relation to the oppositions that harmony joins together, but on the other hand music belongs to Venus, because love is a kind of harmony. In this sense Harmony is the daughter of Venus and Mars.

The Neoplatonists, who followed this tradition, considered that knowledge is a way of purifying the soul and making possible the *anamnesis* of the Intelligible and the recovery of the lost unity with the One. Music is a type of self-knowledge, especially if one understands the nature of our soul as consisting in its harmonic essence. When the soul suffers a disarrangement of its internal harmony, after entering the world of *genesis*, forgets the divine harmony that it heard in the heavens; whenever music sounds and reminds the soul that primordial state, it brings the joy of the possibility of recovering that state.

At that original state, the contemplation of the harmony of the spheres corresponded to a direct assimilation of the object that is contemplated and the subject that contemplates or hears those harmonies in a transcendent way. When this capacity is recovered or actualised (or bestowed as a natural talent in the case of Pythagoras), it corresponds to what we could call ‘clairaudience’ (a term that reappeared in recent times, employed by the composer and author Murray Schaffer in analogy to the concept of clairvoyance).¹⁷

At the stage when the soul has forgotten its own harmony, mu-

¹⁶ Cf. Proclus, *Chald.Philos* 207, 5-17 Des Places. See G. van Riel’s account of Proclus’s related notions of pleasure, desire, life and joy in *Pleasure and the Good Life: Plato, Aristotle, and the Neoplatonists*, Leiden, Brill, 2000, especially pp.130-133.

¹⁷ See R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*, Rochester, Destiny Books, 1994, pp. 10-11.

sic can be understood as the remembrance of the harmony of the spheres and as the medicine of the soul, which restores its essential nature by re-actualising clean hearing, harmony and unity.

Plato describes in the *Timaeus*, how the revolutions and movements of the soul, which were disturbed by the affections (*pathémata*) of the sensible world, are able to regain their original serenity and stability through education and the contemplation and imitation of the harmony of the universe, which is a living being. He concludes at *Timaeus* 44B8:

And now if some right nurture lends help towards education such a person becomes entirely whole and healthy, having escaped the worst of maladies (*nosos*); whereas if he be neglectful, he journeys through a life halt and maimed and comes back to Hades uninitiate and without understanding (*atelēs kai anoētos*) (transl. Cornford with some changes).

Philosophy, musical education and the mathematical sciences in general provide the soul with this nurture (*trophē*) (cf. *Timaeus* 87B and 90C-D).

The Neoplatonist Hierocles, commenting on this passage says, that thanks to philosophy:

one may acquire truth and virtue, regain one's purity, succeed in obtaining likeness to god, and, as Plato's *Timaeus*, that keen teacher of Pythagorean doctrines, says, having become 'healthy and whole' (*hugîēs kai holoklēros*), arrive at the form of one's previous state' (Proem.2.9, transl. Schibli).

As mentioned above, the previous, original state of the soul is understood as a state of harmony, where the soul heard the Harmony of the Spheres (cf. Iamblichus, *De Myst.*III.9); consequently, music is an art that has a therapeutic function, which makes possible the recovery of the primordial essence of the soul and its spiritual health, in the same way that medicine heals the body. Aristoxenos (Fr. 29, Wehrli) presents this analogy in the following terms:

The Pythagoreans, says Aristoxenus, practiced purification of the body through medicine and purification of the soul through music (Transl. Huffman).

We can distinguish two stages in this purification and transformation of the soul through music, understood in a Pythagorean sense. One can be explained as Hermetic or alchemical (spagyric) healing through music and a second stage can be conceived as a higher purely spiritual or theurgic level, which corresponds to the inspired and anagogic art of Apollo and the Muses. ‘Anagogic’ is that which favours the ascent of the soul; and theurgy is a hieratic art (*hieratikē technē*) that re-opens the connection between Heaven and earth.

I am using the term “alchemical” in the sense that the substance of the soul analogically depicted as sound, as vibrating sound, can follow a process of spiritual healing understood as a harmonization. In the same way, the elements of the cosmos are also transformed into a unity thanks to the action of divine principles of harmony. The term “theurgy” refers in this context to a deeper, spiritual transformation of the soul on its way up towards the One.

However, we could say that the same music can have an alchemical effect on a soul, while having a theurgic effect on another, depending on different degrees of receptivity, in relation to the Neoplatonic principle that each reality receives the causes according to its own capacity (cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* VI.4.11.3-4).¹⁸

In order to clarify this distinction between the alchemical and theurgic transformation of the soul through music, we can consider it with regard to the ancient division of the ancient Mysteries in Lesser and Greater Mysteries, where the former were a preparation for the latter.¹⁹ We can consider this alchemical healing in the context of Hermetism and Hermes, the inventor of the lyre and god of the hermetic disciplines of the *trivium* and the *quadrivium*. This god is related to Asclepius, the god of medicine, both sharing a similar symbol in the caduceus. Hermetic music

¹⁸ See G. Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul, the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*, University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995, p. 86.

¹⁹ Strictly speaking, music corresponds to the Lesser Mysteries, however one can talk analogically about an Intelligible, transcendent, aspect of music that corresponds to the Greater Mysteries. The mystical aspect of music corresponds to the most interior part of it, which is related to silence; the profound reality of the mysteries works in silence (and the nocturnal), but music even though it is a positive expression or affirmation of that inner silence in terms of sound, it keeps its roots in it and for that reason is able to evoke both the nocturnal or non-manifested (as in many Romantic compositions) and the luminous manifestation of that interiority.

is, therefore, that kind of music which transforms the acoustic space that surrounds us, helping the soul to be receptive again of the *logos*, understood not only as a faculty but also as the source of the proportions of the cosmos.

The process of transformation of the soul is a re-enactment of the cosmogonic process. In ancient religions creation was understood in terms of sound; there is a primordial sound that contains the acoustic seeds of all creation. Although the creative energy of the demiurgic principle can be depicted in terms of light, voice can also be conceived of as a clear sounding principle that transmits a paradigmatic order to the vibration of the receptive primal waters. The Hermetic account of creation in the *Poimandres* contains many acoustic features, which are important for our topic:

I saw an endless vision in which everything became light [...] After a little while, darkness arose separately and descended [...]. Then the darkness changed into something of a watery nature [...] it produced an unspeakable wailing roar (*goos*). Then an inarticulate cry (*asynarthros boē*) like the voice (*phônê*) of fire came forth from it. But from the light ... a holy word (*logos hagios*) mounted upon the <watery> nature, and untempered fire leapt up from the watery nature to the height above. The fire was nimble and piercing (*oxys*) and active as well, and because the air was light it followed after spirit and rose up to the fire (...). Earth and water stayed behind, mixed with one another, so that <earth> could not be distinguished from water, but they were stirred to hear by the spiritual word that moved upon them. (*Poimandres*, 4.2 - 5.9; trans. Copenhaver).

It should not surprise us that texts of this kind present inarticulate voices and sounds in order to depict the primordial state of the world and the demiurgic action of the divine word in terms of sound.

According to Heraclitus, Stoicism and Platonism, *Logos* is not only a human thing, it comes from higher principles and therefore it has an area of influence that is greater than the human sphere. Iamblichus said that higher causes are more penetrating (*drimyterian*) than lower ones (Fr. 8, *In Alc.* Dillon = Olymp. *In Alc.* 110, 13 ff. Cr.).²⁰ Therefore, the causality of the *Logos* extends to more

²⁰ Cf. A.C. Lloyd, *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 106 ff. Lloyd explained Proclus' views on causality according to what he called a "Proclan rule", pointing out that "a greater degree of [produc-

things than rational speech and can leave signatures (*synthêmata*) in the voices of animals, and even in inanimate objects. Its creative power is there from the beginning and creates beings by giving them an acoustic name. Those names are like seeds (*symbols*) sown by the Paternal Intellect (cf. *Chaldean Oracles*, Fr. 108).

The essential names connect all realities to the Intellect and these sounds are “originary” in the deepest sense, and go back to a tradition that starts with the Demiurge (Plato, *Crat.* 397b-c and Proclus, *In Crat.* LI) and with the mythical giver of names (e.g. Adam) who used them in accordance with inspiration (Eusebius, *P.E.* XI.6.1 ff.).²¹ These names transcend the rational and divided ones proper to a discursive language and correspond to “ineffable symbols” (Proclus, *In Tim.* I.211.1).²² For that reason, the metaphysical character of language, and its theurgic power, is preserved in the acoustic nature of more stable languages and in the words communicated to the theurgists, such as the sacred barbarian names used in rituals, according to Iamblichus (*D.M.* VII.4-5).

The inner connection between sound and the metaphysical principles (because sound has a sacred element), therefore, makes ritual or sacred music a privileged transformative spiritual tool.

Let us come back to Iamblichus’ views on causality. He considers that higher causes are more penetrating than lower ones. He uses the adjective *drimys* = sharp, piercing, pungent; these are words related to touch and taste. It is interesting to consider that in ancient Greek music a high-pitched sound is *oxys*, a word that means acute, sharp and a pungent flavor as well.²³ According to the theory of the harmony of the spheres, the higher spheres give

tive] power implies a greater transmission of properties”. This is complemented by another rule: “a superior cause manifests its greater power by operating first”. This implies that “the higher cause produces the generic element in a product and the lower cause the specific elements or differentiae.”

²¹ There is a *harmony* between the sounds that compose the divine name and the essence of the named thing.

²² Cf. Majercik, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10; 25-27; 38-39; 44-45; 141; 178. The *symbola* and *synthêmata* of Neoplatonism are related to *nomina sacra* and the so called *voces mysticae* (also *nomina barbara*) that have the capacity to reconnect with the divine. These acoustic *synthêmata* can be natural sounds or sung and produced by human voices or instruments (for example the magic wheel of the Lynges, mentioned below). On Hierocles’ theurgy and the *symbola* see Schibli, *op.cit.*, p. 113.

²³ Cf. Arist. *De Anima* 420b.

high-pitched notes,²⁴ and ether corresponds to the higher notes.²⁵

In another passage of the *Poimandres'* account of creation we can find an important acoustic feature.

The craftsman-mind, together with the word [of god], encompassing the circles [of the sensible world] and whirling them about with a rush (*rhoizos*), turned his craftworks about (...) (*Poimandres*, 11.1-2, trans. Copenhaver).

The term *rhoizos* (a rushing, whistling, hissing of buzzing sound of birds, arrows, serpents, insects, the wind, etc.), is very important for theurgy and has a Chaldean or Pythagorean origin.²⁶ Iamblichus used it to depict the sound of the planetary spheres moving in their circles around the Sun (V.P. 15.65.18).

It is also used to symbolize the movement of the spirit, especially because it portrays the rushing sound of the emission of breath. *Rhoizos* is usually connected with a whirling movement, and through this symbolism it can represent the encompassing character of spiritual principles and the element ether. This spiritual sound and circular movement was also part of the ritual symbolism of the musical instrument called “*rhombos*”. Marinus depicts how Proclus used this instrument to make rain over Attica (V.*Procli*, 28).²⁷

This instrument is similar to the *strophalos*, the wheel dedicated to the goddess Hecate, which is comparable to another ritual wheel, called the *Iynx*. The *Iynges* were the divine birds of the

²⁴ Most authors follow this view, except Nicomachus. See Barker (op.cit. 1989), p. 251, note 20. Nicomachus associated higher spheres with lower notes, this might correspond to a view that considers the low note as containing the higher ones. In the same way the humming of the bees is a low sound and the string call “bourdon” is the lowest in the guitar or the violin. According to this symbolism the humming sound is the pneumatic “container” (*periechon*) of the lower levels.

²⁵ The highest “tetrachord” corresponds to ether in Aristides Quintilianus, *De Musica* (Book III.Ch.14). Usually, high-pitched utterances of birds or children voices represent higher states of being. A musical example of this primordial sound can be found in the descending fourths and fifths of Beethoven’s 9th *Symphony*, in the first movement that represents a cosmogonic beginning in music.

²⁶ Cf. Iamblichus, *On de Mysteries*, transl. E. C. Clarke, J. M. Dillon, J. P. Hershbell, Atlanta, the Society of Biblical Literature, 2003, p. 141, note 188.

²⁷ Instead of understanding this as mere magic, we could think that Proclus used the *rhombos* to awake the vibrations of cosmic sympathy in order to recover the harmony of the elements, and we should also take into account that rain or the upper waters symbolize the spiritual influence that mediates between earth and the heavens.

Chaldeans and also musical theurgic instruments.

The term *iynx* originally designated a bird, the wryneck, which was bound to a wheel in certain rituals.²⁸ It is interesting to notice that the wryneck can turn its head almost 180 degrees while it makes a hissing sound. Their ability to turn their necks makes them a sign (*synthêma*) of the encircling divinities and their particular sound connects them with the divine *Logos*.²⁹

These theurgic wheels and birds have the capacity of waking up, by sympathy, the audible *symbola*. These symbols are very important for the journey of the soul, as had been pointed out by G. Shaw, commenting the *Chaldean Oracles*:

For the soul to make its ascent to the gods the Oracles say that it had to recover the audible *symbola* sent from the Father by giving them expression, through “speaking a word” (C.O. frg.109).³⁰

The Demiurge, or the Father of the *Chaldean Oracles*, has a central position, which is reflected in the central position of the Sun, as the heart or the mind of the universe (Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.19.9), surrounded on each side by three planets. The Sun is therefore the mediator between the first stage of transformation and the second theurgic stage. The soul recovers the centre of its own inner nature and faculties, when it reconnects with the centre of the harmony of the cosmos, which is analogically connected to the Sun and the World-Soul. Proclus’ interpretation of the

²⁸ See Majercik, *op.cit.*, p. 9. The scientific name of the bird is *Lynx torquilla*.

²⁹ The *Iynges* can be understood as mediators or messengers of the *Logos* or as the message itself. Cf. Majercik, *ibid.* pp. 9 ff. and 30. We can see the awakening and “anagogic” (elevating) aspects of the symbolism of the *Iynges*, which represent the Ideas or Forms. The Paternal Intellect sounds forth the Ideas (C.O. frg.37) and a formless fire sends forth a voice together with a light, rushing (*rhoizaion*) like a spiral round the earth (C.O. frg.146). At the same time, the symbolism of the bird could be related to Orphic and Dionysian rituals, where birds were freed to represent the liberation of the soul from sensible manifestation. The soul remembers the divine names and spiritual sounds and joins the divine circuit (like the bird). The circles of this world make a sound, and our souls, like birds, need to be freed by the higher principles and causes of those circles, represented by the *Iynges*; whose own song is higher than the sound of the *rhombus* itself. We need to re-connect one wheel with the other, the material one with the spiritual wheel. In this way through sympathetic acts, our soul is guided by the free birds and their intelligible songs, away from the wheel of material existence. Plutarch mentions this kind of mystic symbolism in his *Cons. ad ux* (*Consolation to his wife*), 10, p.611.

³⁰ G. Shaw, *op.cit.*, p.176.

musical scale of the *Timaeus* presents a musical-cosmic analogy regarding the central interval, between *paramesê* and *mesê*, and the World-Soul (*In Tim.* II.234.1).³¹

This journey of the soul corresponds to the inner awakening of the macrocosmic-microcosmic relationship and it is related to the spheres of the world and to the hermetic healing power and the sciences or knowledge presided by him. Once that the soul has reached the centre – the Sun as source of harmony –, it can continue its spiritual journey of transformation towards the causes of the harmony of those cosmic spheres: the Muses, and through the help of their inspiration continue the ascent. On the one hand, the spiritual journey supposes an advice to avoid the Sirens (or to listen to their song but in relation to the axial-vertical direction towards the real causes of that song = represented by Ulysses tied to the mast); while on the other hand, theurgy leads the soul to the transcendent causes of that song, the Muses.

The cosmic spheres are connected to the Sirens, whose song is subordinated to the higher intellectual music of the Muses and Apollo. The importance of sound and music for theurgy, helps us understand that the first stage, i.e. finding the solar centre, is subordinated to the Divine and Intelligible causes of sound and harmony (Apollo as spiritual Sun and the Muses as harmonious spiritual light).

According to the first stage of its alchemical transformation, the soul's substance becomes ordered in relation to a centre, which corresponds to Apollo as a Monad and the Sun, together with the central science of Arithmetic.³²

³¹ We have the testimony of Ptolemy that shows not only the identification *paramesê* = Sun in *Harmonics* III.16 (111), 304 but what is more remarkable is that in the Canopus inscription ascribed also to Ptolemy (included in the Teubner edition of Ptolemy's works, ed. J.L. Heiberg, Leipzig, 1898-1907, *Op. Min.* II, 154f), an identical scheme of the spheres of the world is depicted but this time with numbers on the side, and 18 and 16 are precisely the numbers attributed to the interval between the *paramesê* and the *mesê* that correspond to the spheres of the Sun = 18 and Venus and Mercury = 16; these numbers are contained in Plato's *Timaeus* progression (doubles of 9 and 8). Proclus connects the middle of the scale with the World-Soul, while Pythagorean sources connected the *paramesê* or the *mesê* with the Sun. Cf. W. Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, Harvard, Harvard University Press, 1972, pp. 352-354.

³² Cf. Proclus, *In Crat.* 97.15 ff. (103) Pasq. = Section 174.34. The *Theologoumena Arithmeticae* (p. 21 De Falco) attributed to Iamblichus, shows the connection between the Monad and Arithmetic, and presents the association between

Apollo's lyre or kithara (with seven strings) has a central string that produces the musical note called “*mesē*” or middle note. The central position in the choir of the Muses also corresponds to Apollo, the god that received the Lyre from his brother Hermes (*Homeric Hymn 4*). The comparison between the chorus-leader and the central note (*mesē* or keynote in a sense) appears clearly in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 1018b (compared to a *koryphaios* and *archē* or starting point). The pseudo-Aristotelian *Problems* (Pr.19.33 and 19.20), also mention the leading position of the *mesē* in the context of the strings of the kithara, using the word ‘*hēgemōn*’.³³

It is interesting to point out that in a cosmological sense, the Neoplatonists also associated the Sun with the location of a demiurgic potency and the centre of the World-Soul. As in Philolaus cosmology, Plato *Timaeus* (34B-C and 36D-E), also states that creation begins at the centre of the Soul (*mesē*), and in this Pythagorean tradition, the terms ‘*koryphaios*’ and ‘*hēgemōn*’ are related both to the Sun and the World-Soul. Music is therefore a privileged language to express the guidance of the central note and how it is able to associate and unify acoustic multiplicity around it thanks to the structure of the scale.

In a sense, the “tetradic” order of the universe (related to Hermes or Heracles; cf. *Theol.Arithm.* 28-29: the cycle of time and the division of the year in seasons and in twelve months; and of the day in morning, midday, afternoon and night, etc.) acquires unification thanks to the Sun that traverses the divisions of the quaternary.³⁴ In a sense Hermes' guidance is associated to

the tetrad and the four mathematical sciences (number 4 is usually associated with Hermes and the lyre of four strings). Proclus connects Apollo with the Unity as the source of the harmony of the universe (cf. *In Remp.* II.4.5 ff., where he mentions that the Soul corresponds to *mesē*: the middle note of his Lyre; see also *In Remp.* I.57.8-23). Martianus Capella and Dante connected the science of Arithmetic with the Sun as well.

³³ Cf. S. Hagel, *Ancient Greek Music: A New Technical History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 118-120.

³⁴ When the Tetradic is organized as a Decad shows a circular arrangement around a centre, i.e. 9 + 1, as in the case of the Pythagorean *tetrakty*s where the unity can be symbolised by the point at the top corner, but also by the central point. The circle of the seasons (divided by four) was also related to the strings of a musical instrument, the already mentioned lyre of four strings of Hermes (cf. Boethius, *Inst. Mus.* I.ii.187.20 and xx.206.5 F.). On Hermes, the lyre, the four elements and the seasons, also see Burkert (*op.cit.* 1972) p. 355-356 and Diodorus, *Hist.I.16.1*.

the centrality of the solar or Apollonian principle, as if this guidance were the activation/awakening of the awareness of the ray of spiritual light that connects to a more primordial source of light.³⁵

There are many Neoplatonic texts (Proclus, *In Alcib.* 195-196; *In Euclid.* 55.16-23 and Hermias, *In Phaedrum*, 127.30; 254.15-21; 255.11-256.4) that link Hermes with the sciences (known as hermaic sciences) and consider him as the guide who awakens the soul and its *logos*. Another example of this alchemical transformation of the soul under the guidance of Hermes is Martianus Capella's book: *On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury* (*De Nuptiis*). The role of music is very important in this book that presents the seven liberal arts as Mercury's gifts to his bride. Especially important for its later influence is the depiction of the Muses flying towards Apollo each carried by a swan and pairing each Muse in correspondence to a planetary sphere. This image expresses that the journey of the soul, guided by Mercury, through the sciences and the planetary spheres is in a way subordinated to the higher harmonizing action of the Muses and Apollo. The fact that the swans of the Muses are depicted by Martianus as the hyperborean birds of Apollo, shows that the cosmic movement of the first dynamic (alchemical) stage finds an stable (theurgic) harmony in the Polar regions (Hyperborea), represented by the *Ursa Major* (also connected to the legend of Pythagoras and the bear, cf. Porphyry *V.P.* 23-24, Iamblichus *V.P.* 60).

As we have mentioned before, Music as a science of the *quadrivium* and the contemplation of the harmony of the spheres correspond to the lesser mysteries in the sense that it depends on higher principles: the Intellectual harmony of the Muses in their circular dance around Apollo. The contemplation of the Intelligible harmony and the inspiration or illumination of the Muses correspond to a higher stage, which reveals that their source is Apollo. This music inspires a unitive love of Unity, which corresponds to the highest kind of Music in Proclus' classification in his *Commentary on the Republic*. *In Remp.* I.57.8 (cf. levels of

³⁵ This ray of light is also compared to a golden string; see Plato's "simile of the puppet" with its "sacred and golden string of *logismos*" (*Laws* 644D-645A). Porphyry (*apud Stobaeus Ecl.1.41.60*), says that "Hermes, with his golden staff—in reality, reason [*logos*]—meets the soul and clearly points the way to the Good." Quoted and translated by R. Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1986, p.117. See p.42 of this book, for the identification between Hermes and *Logos*.

poetry and life in I.177.7 ff.).

We can compare also the first stage of the soul's *epistrophe* (return) with the sea-journey of Ulysses, who can hear the Sirens and is not carried away by their song, because of being tied to the mast of the ship. On another episode (book X), he is not transformed into an animal like his companions under the spell of Circe, thanks to the antidote that Hermes presents to him in the form of a white flower, called '*moly*'. Porphyry interprets the figure of Circe as the "cycle of transmigration" of the soul (Stob. *Ecl.*1.41.60) and it is possible to understand "*moly*" as the gift of "memory" and *anamnesis*, proper to the hermaic sciences³⁶

The Neoplatonists understand that the transformation of the soul resides first in putting the human nature and condition to a good use and making it receptive again of the divine harmony. This can be expressed poetically with Hermes' golden staff or as a conversion towards the mast near the centre of the ship and the attachment to the permanent pole of the cosmos. The same vertical anagogic *dynamis* is expressed with the musical scale and the "cosmic monochord".

In order to summarize some of the topics that I have mentioned until now, we can say that music is first a kind of purification of negative emotions: attachment to material things, egotism, etc.; while at the same time represents an occasion to obtain openness, flexibility and receptivity towards divine harmony. Secondly, we can mention the scientific or cosmic aspect of the mathematical sciences, which is a further stage in this concentration and ascent towards the principle of harmony. In third place, the anagogic power of music finds its highest realization and expression in the level of the inspired music of the Muses, which at the same time is an expression of the Unity of Apollo.

For Proclus (*In Remp.* I.57.8 ff.), music has an educational and therapeutic role at the beginning, and goes deeper in the spiritual healing of the soul through different stages. My intention has been to suggest that all these therapeutic or transformative aspects depend ultimately on a common divine principle, namely

³⁶ Cf. H. Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery*, London, Burns and Oates, 1963, pp.179 ff.

the god of music, Apollo. In his Commentary on Plato's *Cratylus*, (*In Crat.* 97.15 ff. (103) Pasq. = Section 174.34), Proclus presents Apollo as the god who presides over medicine, divination, archery and music. He says that the Apollonian cause manifested in the Sun "provides all things with the power of unification" (98.1).

Proclus describes the analogy between these disciplines in the following terms:

The power of medicine eliminates the disparate aspect of illnesses, and bestows the gift of unitary health. For health is symmetry and accords with nature, whereas what is variegated is unnatural. And again, the power of prophecy, in revealing the simplicity of truth, destroys the variety of falsehood. And that of archery, as it destroys everything errant and beastly, and gives control to discipline and refinement, cleaves to unity and dissolves the disordered nature which is carried into multiplicity. And as for music, through rhythm and harmony it instills a bond, friendship, and unity in the universe, and everything opposite to these it removes (99.8 ff Pasq. transl. Duvick).

It is important to notice that Proclus uses the word "errant" (*plēmmeles*), which means out of tune, discordant, erring (faulty) and in the Platonic tradition is connected to the discordant and disorderly (*plēmmeles kai atakton*) motion that occurred before the Demiurge brought the cosmos into order, according to Plato's *Timaeus* 30a³⁷. It is interesting to connect this notion of Apollonian archery with the killing of the serpent Python. The fixation of the serpent with an arrow or spear represents the foundation of a cosmos established on paradigms of harmony; in the same way that tuning a lyre represents the process of fixing the potentialities of the instrument into a fixed system of tuning and paradigmatic scales. This is symbolized with the serpent, which corresponds to the errant potencies and affections and on the other hand to the continuity of life and the receptivity of the principles.³⁸ The Apollonian and Hermetic symbolism represents

³⁷ Cf. J. Phillips, *Order from Disorder: Proclus' Doctrine of Evil and Its Roots in Ancient Platonism*, Leiden, Brill, 2007, pp. 95-96 and Proclus, *In Tim.* I.325,30-328.9; 328.1-9; 367,30-368,11.

³⁸ On the one hand the serpent represents the power of life, the unbreakable connection and continuity of the universal life (the divine *apeiron*), but on the other hand it represents the direction towards infinity related to the indeterminacy of matter, that needs to be fixed and directed thanks to divine Providence of the Soul, or in the case of the human soul thanks to the solar orientation or

the element of divine order with the notion of the verticality of the axis of the world. This symbolism is noticeable in the divine monochord or the strings of the golden lyre of Apollo, his golden arrow (and the arrow of the Hyperborean Abaris), the caduceus of Hermes and the rod of Asclepius, already mentioned.

The serpent, in its positive symbolism, represents the feminine or maternal aspect of the Divine. In Hinduism, this principle is called ‘*Shakti*’, the universal power of life, which can be compared to the Neoplatonic ‘*Apeiria*’, as an aspect of the Infinite potency of the One. The just mentioned ‘*Shakti*’, is also conceived as ‘*Kriyâ-Shakti*’, which means Divine Activity;³⁹ therefore we can connect this concept with Neoplatonic theurgy, which is a word that has the same meaning: divine activity or work. It is also interesting to notice that *Mâyâ*, in Hinduism, is the cosmic reflection of *Shakti*, and if we understand *Mâyâ*, as “illusion”, we can consider that the cosmic aspect of the Hermetic journey of the soul is also a way of realizing that if the harmony of the cosmos is not seen in connection to its divine causes, it becomes the illusion of the song of the Sirens. On the other hand, if we see *Mâyâ*, or the harmony of the world, as the divine art of the Intellect, therefore, the *anamnesis* of the divine connection or *synecheia* of the Universe is recovered in a theurgic and unitive way. In view of that, we are able to see the harmony of the spheres as an expression of a higher harmony, instead of an enchanting illusion. It is interesting to note that in Greek mythology, the mother of Hermes, is Maia, one of the seven Pleiades, who were seven, like the seven strings of the lyre.⁴⁰

At the beginning of this paper I mentioned the Plotinian con-

the guidance of a the Hermetic genius. This was represented in the Middle Ages with David tuning his triangular harp. Cf. also the frontispiece of F. Gafori's *Practica musicæ* (1496), where Apollo is depicted with a cosmic monochord represented by the serpent Python at his feet.

³⁹ Cf. A. Daniélou, *The Myths and Gods of India*, Rochester, Inner Traditions, 1991, p. 39.

⁴⁰ Cf. Ovid, *Fasti*, 5.79 ff, where Hermes is depicted as inventing the lyre of seven strings, in honour to his mother and her sisters. The name of the Pleiades is related to the verb *plein*: to sail. The myth of the lost or vanished Pleiad could be related to the search for a lost harmony and the transcendent ray of light. May was for the Romans, the month of Maia, which according to a late Christian tradition became the month of the Virgin (other feasts of the Virgin are related to numbers that are multiples of 5, 15 and 25).

cept of formless beauty. In the context of the transcendence of this unmanifested or formless beauty, we could say that the origin of music is silence and that in order to develop a care for beauty in sound one needs to learn how to value silence. In this sense music is related to the notion of “mystery” and the Greek verb “*myo*”, which means “to close the eyes or the mouth” (*myein, myesis*, one stage of the Mysteries of Eleusis). In the silence of the night, one closes the eyes and sees a different kind of Sun or spiritual light.

Apuleius in his *Metamorphoses* (11.23), says “*nocte media vidi solem candido coruscantem lumine* (in the middle of the night I saw the Sun gleaming with bright brilliance)”. The same can happen in an acoustic sense. When we close our ears to the noises of profane life we can hear a sacred silence in the nature that surrounds us: the little noises of the animals in the trees and the different elements (water and wind, etc.) and the harmonic sounds of the art of music, prepare the soul to a higher experience of silence. Also during the night time hearing is enhanced. This contemplative attitude is related to the feminine, the nocturnal, and the openness towards the vibration or the benefic influence that surrounds the cosmos.

Proclus (*In Tim. I.314.1*) quotes an Orphic fragment about the re-creation of the cosmos, when Zeus goes to hear the “Counsel of the Night”:

Zeus therefore contains all these wholes in a monadic and intellectual manner and according to these oracles of Night he causes all the creatures inside the cosmos to exist, both gods and the portions of the universe. When at any rate he poses the question to Night:

How will all things be one for me and also each separate from the other?

[She replies]:

Wrap all things around with unspeakable Ether, and inside it in the middle place Heaven; then inside it place unbounded Earth, inside place the Sea, inside it place all the constellations with which Heaven is crowned.

Moreover concerning all the other works of creation she further proposed:

But when you stretch a powerful bond over everything,

– this is certainly the powerful and indissoluble bond which proceeds from nature, soul and intellect, for Plato too says that ‘living things were born bound by bonds made up of soul’ (*Tim. 38E5*) (transl. Runia-Share).

Proclus also describes this bond as “the bond of proportion”, which he compares with the *golden chain* of Zeus (Homer *Il.8.19*) and with Intelligible Life.⁴¹

The Orphic account of the Counsel of the Night – or the Oracle (*Chrēsmos*) as Proclus calls it –, provides a meaningful context for understanding acoustic symbolism, especially in relation to Ether, which was considered to be an all-pervading element for the transmission of sound. There is a congeniality (*syngeneia*) between cosmic sound and the human soul and its inner emotions. For this reason music is eloquent and able to connect with human interiority. Plato expresses this inner affinity between music and the soul in the *Republic* III 401c-d, where he claims that the best education is to surround young students with harmony and beauty. Those surrounded by music, as if it were a breeze from healthy places, receive its purifying influence.

It is important that Plato related musical education with the notion of a healthy and respirable environment because the nature of sound is intimately connected with air or with pure ether as we have seen, which correspond to the vehicles for spreading sound.

Breathing is a natural function and we do not think about how to perform it, but it connects us to the cosmos and it has a rhythm. Aristotle refers to the Orphic doctrine that says that the soul comes in from the Universe when breathing (this idea is preserved also in words such as *pneuma* and *spiritus*). We do not need to understand this conception only in its literal or material sense. This is related to the notion that the divine ether permeates everything and surrounds the Universe; the Universe is maintained thanks to the cohesion of this vibrating element. For this reason Virgil (*Georg.* IV.219-227) connected the humming sound of the bees with the Divine Word or Intelligence that penetrates all corners of the world and says:

Led by these tokens, and with such traits to guide,
Some say that unto bees a share is given

⁴¹ Cf. *In Tim.* I.262.23 and II.24.24: “And this is the strongest bond, as the theologians say, since it has been stretched through all things and connected by a golden chain (*Orph.Fr.166*, Kern). According to the Theologian (Orpheus), Zeus establishes the golden chain on the advice of Night: When you have stretched round the strong bond over all things - A golden chain is suspended from the aether. (transl. Baltzly.)”

Of the Divine Intelligence, and to drink
Pure draughts of ether; for God permeates all—
Earth, and wide ocean, and the vault of heaven—
From whom flocks, herds, men, beasts of every kind,
Draw each at birth the fine essential flame;
Yea, and that all things hence to Him return,
Brought back by dissolution, nor can death
Find place: but, each into his starry rank,
Alive they soar, and mount the heights of heaven.
(transl. J. B. Greenough)

According to this symbolism even animal voices present signs (*synthémata*) of the *Logos*. Bees are not only a visual symbol of divine *pneuma* because they are yellow and fly together in a swarm.⁴² They are a symbol because they make a humming sound, similar to a drone. The term “drone” refers in music to a note or chord that is continuously sounded.⁴³

This symbolism takes us back to the state of undifferentiation of primordial Unity, where everything was connected. This can be expressed either with the ether as the source of the elements or with the primordial waters and their potentiality, where the symbol of the conch, or sea shell represents the universal sound that contains all sounds.⁴⁴

⁴² Yellow is the colour of fire or illuminated air. The Platonic Ideas are compared to a swarm in *Chald. Orac.* Fr.37. The yellow bell of ancient Chinese music was the central tone used as the official measure for tuning the musical scale system.

⁴³ Musical instruments imitate the humming or buzzing sound of the bee with for example a pipe on the bagpipe or a string on the hurdy-gurdy (wheel fiddle). A “drone” is a kind of bee and there are also bells or a pipe in the church organ known as “bourdon” (imitating the sound of the bumblebee). This represents the continuity of reality and the all-pervading resonance of divine ether and how illuminated and resounding air contains symbolically as acoustic environment the whole creation. At the same time, as Aristotle says (*H.A.* IV.9), insects like bees and cicadas produce their special sounds by the friction (*tripsis*) of the air or the *pneuma*. This friction can be related to fire as well and it is proper to string instruments that make the ether vibrate, while wind instruments make moist air vibrate. Cf. Aristides Quintilianus, *De Musica*, II.18, 90.9. At the beginning of *Georgics* IV, Virgil expresses the connection between bees and air, especially referring to honey as an air-born and celestial gift (*aerii mellis caelestia dona*). Bees are also related to the clashing cymbals (or shields) of the Curetes (*Georg.* 149-152), and attracted by their sound they nourished the King of Heaven, Jupiter. Cymbals are also golden, like honey, and the sound of the cymbal expresses an enveloping instantaneous resonance, proper to the sudden access to a transcendent level of reality.

⁴⁴ The two parts of the egg of the world can also be represented with the

In terms of the cosmic ages of the world, the Golden Age, as Ovid depicts it, was an age where the seasons of the year were still not differentiated. This age corresponds to the element of air, to Spring and the pure air of the morning and the peace that surrounds those healthy places described by Plato in the passage of the *Republic* quoted above. In Chinese symbolism it corresponds to the central yellow bell (that contains pure air), paradigm for tuning musical scales (also related to the brass gong).

According to Tibetan Buddhist symbolism, the clear sound of the hand-bell represents the calling of the voice of Wisdom, the female principle *Prajnā Paramita*. Wisdom is united in a mystical marriage with Method, *upāya*, corresponding to the male principle of the formal ornamentation of knowledge with skillful activity.⁴⁵ The openness, – the resounding void of the bell of *prajnā* – makes possible sound and the desire of primordial harmony, while the axial method and the steps of the intervals of the scale correspond to *upāya*, the verticality of the musical scale.⁴⁶

The task of music is to recover that unified sound, the marriage of the female and the male aspects, and to bring us back to that paradisiacal environment represented with the Golden Age and Spring. In this way music functions as a vehicle, and through resonance, and the assimilation (or internalization) of those vibrations, together with rhythmic breathing (in a Pythagorean sense of “cosmic breathing”), is able to open the channel for the return of the vehicle of the soul, which is also harmonic in itself (the harmony or basic goodness is already within the soul).

It is important to understand the role of ether, vibrating air and wind in the theurgic symbolism of music, because these elements (ether may be considered more primordial) represent the intermediary reality that re-connects heaven and earth. Harmony's or music's task is to reunite those separated parts of the world:

two levels of celestial waters and the lower waters (and a swan swimming in the middle), or with Noah's ark and the symbol of the rainbow. These levels need to be reunited and Vishnu's conch shell represents the primordial sound that leads to unity. Vishnu is also symbolized with the fish or a salvific vehicle, as it is the case of the Chaldean Oannes and the dolphin of Apollo.

⁴⁵ This reminds us of the analogous Pythagorean unification of *peras* and *apeiron* already mentioned.

⁴⁶ The bell is held in the left hand, while the *vajra* in the right hand. Cf. R. Beer, *The Handbook of Tibetan Buddhist Symbols*, Chicago, Serindia Publications, 2003, (bell, pp. 92 ff. and vajra, pp. 87 ff.). The adamantine *vajra*/bolt brings to mind Plato's adamantine axis or pillar of light in *Republic* X, 616B.

it supposes a third vibrating element that joins together heaven and earth, which is represented with the winding movement of the swan (or a serpent) and its vibrating voice (a bell or gong that hangs in the air corresponds to the same acoustic symbolism). The ancient harp and lyre express clearly this intermediary symbolism, being a vehicle, a ladder or a bridge between the levels.⁴⁷

The importance of Spring and the centrality of those liberating sounds appears in Iamblichus' depiction of Pythagorean music therapy.

He held that music too made a great contribution to health, if properly used: he took this form of purification very seriously, calling it "healing by music". In the *spring* he engaged in singing like this: a lyre-player was seated in the *centre*, and those who were good at singing sat round him in a circle and sang to his accompaniment, paeans, which they thought raised their spirits and established inner harmony and rhythm (*De vit. Pyth.* XXV.110) (transl. Clark).

Iamblichus depicts Pythagoras' connection to primordial sound in the following passage:

He no longer used musical instruments or songs to create order in himself: through some unutterable, almost inconceivable likeness to the gods, his hearing and his intellect (*noûs*) were intent (*enereidein*) upon the celestial harmonies of the cosmos. It seemed as if he alone could hear and understand the universal harmony and music of the spheres and of the stars which move within them, uttering a song more complete and satisfying than any human melody, composed of subtly varied sounds of motion (*rhoizématôn*) and speeds and sizes and positions, organized in a logical and harmonious relation to each other, and achieving a melodious circuit of subtle and exceptional beauty (*De vit. Pyth.*, XV.65, 9).

⁴⁷ See the cycladic statuettes from Keros preserved at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (47.100.1) ca. 2800-2700 B.C. and at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens (ca.2500-2200 B.C.). It is interesting that on the top of the harp there is an ornament carved in the shape of the head of a swan or other waterfowl. A symbolic connection can be found between the constellations that belong to the "summer triangle" in the Northern sky; these constellations are "Cygnus", "Lyra" and "Aquila" and the myths of Orpheus and Leda and the swan. On the symbolism of the swan and animal musical symbolism in general, see M. Schneider, *El origen musical de los animales-símbolos en la mitología y la escultura antiguas*, Madrid, Siruela, 1998, pp. 187 ff; 250-251; 254.

Iamblichus mentions that the Pythagoreans sang Paens, which are hymns to Apollo. The musical scale or mode (*harmonia*) that corresponds to this kind of hymns was preferable the Dorian mode. Which in the symbolism of the musical space occupies the centre. The Dorian mode is the archetype of a balanced ethical character, as Plato says in the *Laches* 188d.⁴⁸

The high-pitched modes were considered exciting and the low-pitched enervating, the mode which is in the middle of the musical space, the Dorian mode is temperate and similar to the season of spring. According to Aristides Quintilianus there are three basic musical *êthē*: the hesychastic (*hésychastikon*) that produces peace in the soul, the diastatic (*diastatikos* = exalting, expanding) that arouses the spirit and the systalic (*systaltikos* = contracting) that creates gloom (Arist. Quint. *De Mus.* I.12.39; (=12.30.9-15) (cf. I.19.20 = 40.15).⁴⁹

For this reason, Galen says that musical therapy is needed to recover the balance and moderating the extreme dispositions of the soul:

We shall prescribe for some persons a regimen of rhythms and scales (modes) and exercises of such and such a sort, and for others another sort, as Plato taught us. We shall rear the dull and heavy and spiritless in rhythms [such as the “*nomos orthios*” (6/8 + 12/8 o 9/8)] and in the corresponding high pitched scales (modes) that move the soul forcibly [but with dignity] and in exercises of the same kind; and

⁴⁸ “I take the speaker and his speech together, and observe how they sort and harmonize with each other. Such a man is exactly what I understand by ‘musical’—he has tuned himself with the fairest harmony, not that of a lyre or other entertaining instrument, but has made a true concord of his own life between his words and his deeds, not in the Ionian, no, nor in the Phrygian nor in the Lydian, but simply in the Dorian mode, which is the sole Hellenic harmony” (transl. Lamb).

⁴⁹ See Barker (1989), p. 432 and on Ptolemy’s explanation of the relation between modes and seasons, etc., see p. 386). Cf. Cleonides, 206.3-18. Diodorus Siculus, I.16. mentions a Lyre of three strings proper to Hermes, that can be related to the conception of the year divided in three seasons (I.11.5). Macrobius (Sat.1.19) says that the lyre of Mercury had four strings that corresponded to the four seasons. The seasons and their proper characters correspond to the different kinds of *êthos*. There are three basic kinds: dorian, middle (is hesychastic = does not induce any disordered affect and delights the soul peacefully; it is moderate and calms the mind); phrigian, high (diastolic = expanding and dilating the heart, lively, joyful, jubilant, effect); Lydian, low (systolic = contracting, enervating effect of the song, induces sadness, fear, languor and similar feminine effects) in E. Chafe, *Monteverdi’s Tonal Language*, New York, Schirmer Books, 1992, p.237.

we shall rear those who are too high-spirited and who rush about too madly in the opposite kind (*De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* V. 6.20, 2 ff. (tr. P. De Lacey, *Galen. On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*).

Musical modes present paradigms of ethical behavior and make possible a *mimesis* of a good model, bringing closer to the human sphere the normative ideals of Platonism (they have a simultaneous effect on the cognitive and affective parts of the soul).

The journey of the soul towards a central Unity was therefore compared to a musical return or concentration. This was represented with Orpheus singing at the centre of the animals, or Pythagoras and his students singing hymns to Apollo sitting in a circle. That centre is understood as the Adytum, the source of the creative harmonies of the World-Soul, which is an inner and quiet place: the origin of both creation and the musical expression of that manifestation (or any other language or sacred art, and revelation, the cosmos as book, poem, work of art, dialogue), which resembles the most sacred place in a temple.

But the point, on the other hand, is dedicated to intellect. It is due to this fact that the account of the soul is revealed like something from within the forbidden, innermost sanctuary (*ex adutou*); displaying the partless [character] of intellect and announcing its secret and ineffable unification. But intellect itself is founded in itself in a stable manner (*monimôs*), cognising all things in a manner that is peaceful and quiet, it has the status of a point or centre in relation to the soul. If the soul is a circle, with intellect as its the centre, then the soul is the power of the circle. But if the soul is a like a straight line, then intellect will be the point; including what is extended in a mode that is unextended, what is divisible in a mode that is indivisible, and the circular form in the manner of the centre. Intellect in turn has the status of the circle in relation to the nature of the Good around which it converges as a whole at every point by dint of its yearning for the One and its contact with the One. (Proclus, *In Tim.* II.243. 6-17) (transl. Baltzly).

Therefore, a return to the adytum is also a return towards concentration and silence.⁵⁰ The Pythagorean tradition considered an opposition between noise and tranquillity in terms of two paths

⁵⁰ On Proclus' notion of 'adytum' cf. *In Tim.* I 133.20 and *In Remp.* I 86.2.

symbolized with the letter “Y”. The noisy “highway” corresponds to the wide side of the Y and the “narrow path” (*atrapitos*) connects to the living tradition (the inner source manifested in the cosmos and divinely inspired discourses) that is a projection of the fine line of life, mentioned by Virgil (quoted before), which has its source in the Logos and the Intellect.⁵¹ Proclus mentions the narrow and quiet path in his *Hymn to the Muses*:

We hymn, we hymn the light that raises man aloft,
on the nine daughters of great Zeus with splendid voices,
who have rescued from the agony of this world, so hard to bear,
the souls who were wandering in the depth of life
through immaculate rites from intellect-awaking books,
and have taught them to strive eagerly to follow the track leading
beyond the deep gulf of forgetfulness, and to go pure to their kindred star
from which they strayed away, when once they fell
into the headland of birth, mad about material lots.

But, goddesses, put an end to my much-agitated desire too
and throw me into ecstasy through the noeric words of the wise.
That the race of men without fear for the gods may not lead me
astray from the most divine and brilliant path (*atrapitos*) with its
splendid fruit;
Always draw my all-roving soul towards the holy light,
away from the hubbub of the much wandering race
heavy laden from your intellect-strengthening beehives,
and everlasting glory from its mind-charming eloquence.

In this way, the journey of transformation of the soul through sound and music is a journey of return to Primordial silence. The soul has to traverse the harmony of the world, and music can act as a vehicle that takes the soul to the Gates of the Universe (which make a clashing sound, when the soul passes between them.). For this reason, when musical compositions describe the ascent of the soul, towards the end of the climax we usually hear a clash of

⁵¹ Iamblichus comments on the Pythagorean proverb that says: “Avoid the highways and take the short-cuts (*atrapos*)” (*Protrepticus*, 107.1; 111.18-19 Pist.) and understands it as an exhortation “to keep away from the vulgar and merely human life.” The saying recommends “to follow the detached, divine life, and (...) ignore *communis opinion* and value instead one’s own thoughts, which are secret (*aporrēta*)” (trans. S. Rappe).

cymbals, that shows that the opportunity to cross those Gates is very difficult to find and only lasts a subitaneous instant.⁵²

The relationship between harmony and silence is very well expressed by Proclus in his *Commentary on the Chaldean Oracles*. The Formless Beauty that we mentioned at the beginning of this article is identified with silence by Proclus:

Fr. 1: The soul celebrating with hymns (*hymnôdos*) divine realities is perfected, according to the Oracle, placing before and carrying to the Father the ineffable symbols (*synthêmata*) of the Father, which the Father placed in the soul in the first entrance of the choir (*parodos*) of essence. For such are the intellectual and invisible hymns (*noeroi kai aphaneis hymnoi*) of the ascending soul, awakening the memory of harmonic reasons (*harmonikôn logôn*), which bear the inexpressible images in it of the divine powers. (...)

Fr.4: (195 Pitra) The principle that manifests (utters) the level that follows, is more ineffable than its effects and is called by the Oracle, *Logos*. It is necessary that prior to this *Logos* a principle or *Logos* of this *Logos* should subsist, which is a Silence that sustains the *Logos*. (...) As therefore beyond the Intelligibles are the reasons or productive principles (*logoi*) of the Intelligibles, realities being united, so the productive principle in them subsists from another more ineffable unity, though there is a *Logos* of the Silence prior to Intelligibles, but a Silence of silent Intelligibles.

Proclus, *On the Chaldean Oracles* (trans. Johnson with modifications).

Conclusion

I hope that the interpretations of musical symbolism attempted in this paper provided some insight into the proposed topic of the transformation of soul through music in Neoplatonism. Throughout this article we have referred to the necessity of transformation, of changing into a harmonious state where change, time and space are themselves transformed. Wagner wrote in a beautiful section of *Parsifal* (Act I): “Here, time is changed into

⁵² The passage of the argo navis, through the gates of immortality, where it loses its bow when passing between the Symplegades, the Cyanean (azure), or Planctae Rocks, at the mouth of the Euxine Sea.

space”⁵³ These words are sung while the bells of Monsalvat are ringing. “Here”, means the sacred space of the place of the Grail (they are approaching the temple), a symbol of the centre of the world, where the oppositions are transcended thanks to divine harmony. It is significant that a musician expressed this metaphysical conception, because one can say that: “here, *in music*, time becomes space”.

Music works with time and succession, however, its metaphysical meaning and beauty surrounds and contains this succession, and in a way saves or rescues the inner movement of the soul, by putting it into the spiritual container of sacred sound. Music, works with time and is the art of nomadic people, who are ‘saved’ by the transforming character of the spacious – vibrating – harmony and rhythm that gives them a stability that contains time and movement. Architecture, on the other hand is the art of sedentary peoples, works with space and gives a harmonious space (as if it were a solidified music) where people live according to the passage of time, who although reside in a permanent environment, they are used up by time.⁵⁴ Music in a sense is a more primordial art, because it goes deeper into the movements of the soul, while architecture, which is frozen music (according to Goethe, Schelling and Schlegel), is an externalization of the soul’s order and deals with external movement.

The fact that we live surrounded by agitation and anxiety in a world where “time is money” (and time does not become harmonious space) can be expressed according to the ancient symbolism of the ‘ears stopped with wax’, which represented the idea

⁵³ Gurnemanz: “Du siehst, mein Sohn, zum Raum wird hier die Zeit.” Parsifal said before this: I scarcely tread, yet seem already to have come far. (Gradually, while Gurnemanz and Parsifal appear to walk, the scene has changed more perceptibly: the woods have disappeared, and in the rocky walls a gateway has opened, which closes behind them. The way leading upwards through walls of rock, the scene has entirely changed. Gurnemanz and Parsifal now enter the mighty hall of the castle of the Grail.). They walk (time) in a rhythmic way following the sound of the bells, representing divine receptive space: the bell is like the grail, like a vessel containing divine sound.

⁵⁴ The art of nomadic people are music and poetry, which deal with time and use an animal symbolism (mobile symbolism). While architecture is the art of sedentary people, dealing with space and using vegetal and mineral symbolisms (non-mobile symbolism). However, in the Hebrew tradition, which is originally a nomadic tradition where music and poetry had an important meaning for their liturgy, the father of music is Tubalcain, related to metallurgy (he was a smith).

that we are not able to hear the harmony of the spheres anymore. Like Ulysses companions, our ears are blocked up with wax, and this means that we are habituated to a world-view that does not allow us to hear subtler kinds of sounds. Music has the privilege of accustom the soul to those refined and beautiful sounds, and melting away the wax. Music offers itself as a vehicle for our soul, presenting a different kind of world or space. We had forgotten the existence of that kind of world of primordial sound.

This indicates that in order to remember that space of harmony the soul has to follow a method, a dynamic process, in which it can be adapted again to the contemplation of the divine harmony. Divine or metaphysical reality appears as transcendent silence. But at the same time, this transcendence is manifested as intelligible harmony, announced by the World-Soul or the Logos. On the one hand, harmony, and its source in Unity or the Henads, appears as a mystery inexpressible in words; but music can still evoke this mystery in the ‘language’ of sounds. Although it cannot be expressed, music and art can refine our sensitivity and prepare us to live this experience with “the flower of the soul”, the flower of our sensitivity.

This is a living process or transformation, where instead of trying to narrow the mystery of harmony to our own mode of knowing, we need on the other hand, to expand and make a deep change or inner transformation of our faculties, of our sensitivity and mind, in order to adapt them and make them receptive of the intuitive experience of divine harmony and assimilate it in an existential way. Music itself is the vehicle of this process and sonic vibration renovates or recreates a new cosmos within the soul. Thus, in this symbolic conception where primordial sound has an effective salvific power, the soul is changed into a new harmonious cosmos. This is possible because the originary harmony is already present within the soul.